

**SPLASH 2004: NOAA Ship McArthur  
Weekly Science Report**

9 July 2004

Jay Barlow, Cruise Leader

**SCIENCE SUMMARY: Thursday, 1 July to Wednesday, 7 July**

I ended our last weekly report with the statement “but first, we have to find more whales ....”. Well, we found them! We had a wildly successful first full week at sea. We found lots of humpbacks hugging the shoreline of the Queen Charlotte Islands in northern British Columbia. In fact, I would say that there were tons of whales, but since one whale constitutes “tons”, this statement loses some of its impact. We spent two quality days there with humpbacks, collecting many fluke photographs and biopsies.

Although we had high densities of humpback whales off the Queen Charlottes, this density paled in comparison to what we found in Chatham Strait in Southeast Alaska. We decided to take the inland waterway because weather was deteriorating in outside waters (25 knots of wind and 9-12 ft. seas). This turned out to be a very good idea. A very, very good idea. Not only did we find beautiful (Beaufort 1) conditions on the inside, we also found a hundred or so humpback whales. Most were concentrated in the Strait, south of the entrance to Frederick Sound. Again we launched both the small boats (AR-1 and AR-2) and continued to collect fluke photos from the McArthur II. We obtained over 50 unique fluke photographs and 33 biopsies in one day. Our photo-ID catalog of humpback whales has grown so big that we’ve now had our first internal matches: one animal was photographed twice on the same day about 10 miles apart and another animal was photographed again on the following day about 24 miles from the original location.

Other interesting wildlife seen this week included: 1) a giant mola mola (ocean sunfish) the size of a twin mattress (and showing the same behavior as one), 2) a ripe, dead Cuvier’s beaked whale (showing the same behavior), 3) our first short-tailed albatross (which Richard tells me is a rare bird), 4) our first sea otter (see behavioral notes for mola mola), and 5) our first bald eagle. Although the whale watching and wildlife viewing has been great, the scenery in Southeast Alaska has also been impressive. When the sun shines here, there is probably not a prettier place on earth. Are we getting paid for this?

Our plan is now to enter the Pacific again, which has calmed down considerably. We will try a few transects south of the entrance to Icy Strait, and then will proceed in the relatively unexplored (for humpback whales) coastal waters of the central Gulf of Alaska. Onward, northward, whaleward ....

**Sightings and Effort Summary for Marine Mammals**

Date	Start/Stop Time	Position	Total Distance	Avg. Beaufort
070104	0628	N49:55.09 W128:04.84	45.7 nmi	3.9
	1441	N50:21.49 W129:02.45		
070204	0601	N50:44.02 W128:55.83	49.5 nmi	2.7
	1836	N51:07.38 W130:06.60		
070304	0607	N51:36.19 W130:45.38	54.2 nmi	1.5
	2023	N52:16.87 W131:42.42		
070404	0601	N52:07.34 W131:55.17	20.4 nmi	2.0
	1817	N52:36.54 W132:30.22		
070504	0633	N53:10.87 W133:04.18	64.5 nmi	2.0
	1521	N54:00.99 W133:47.23		
070604	0603	N54:37.54 W132:53.50	54.6 nmi	4.6
	1931	N55:14.99 W134:06.41		
070704	0601	N56:19.43 W134:28.14	21.2 nmi	1.9
	1826	N57:08.37 W134:42.65		

CODE	SPECIES	TOT#
022	Lagenorhynchus obliquidens	5
027	Lissodelphis borealis	2
037	Orcinus orca	1
044	Phocoenoides dalli	1
046	Physeter macrocephalus	11
061	Ziphius cavirostris	1
070	Balaenoptera sp.	3
071	Balaenoptera acutorostrata	2
074	Balaenoptera physalus	10
076	Megaptera novaeangliae	36
079	unid. large whale	6
note: Dall's & harbor porpoises and pinnipeds are not included.		
TOTAL		78

**Photo-Project (Holly Fearnbach)**

Species	Weekly	Cumulative
Humpback whale		
Catalog-quality Flukes	94	103
Fin whale	2	2
Northern right whale dolphins	1	1
Pacific white-sided dolphins	3	3
Cuvier's beaked whale (dead)	1	1
Steller sea lion	0	1

## **Poetry Section (Dr. Lilian Carswell, SPLASH Poet Laureate)**

Limericks for Sleepy

(who was rudely awakened from a nap in Chatham Strait at 9 in the morning on Wednesday, July 7)

There once was a whale in the Strait  
Who seemed to have stayed up too late  
He bobbed in the waters  
Perplexing the spotters  
Was he dead, or in a somnolent state?

It may be that he was just dreaming  
Of water through his baleen streaming  
Catching delicate morsels  
To be gulped by the horsefuls  
When alongside him the McArthur came creeping.

It was likely the ship's engines' rumbling  
That awoke him from his slumbering  
For in one swift motion  
He dove deep in the ocean  
And put an end to the spotters' wondering.

Raising Hermie and Allan via radio  
Richard told AR-2 where to go  
Jay and Shannon stood ready  
Camera and crossbow held steady  
Awaiting Sleepy's next blow.

The minutes seemed longer than hours  
While distant spouts blossomed like flowers  
But on this spot of ocean  
Not one single motion--  
The waiting could tax human powers.

With a vociferous blow of wet spray  
The whale surfaced a few yards away  
A biopsy dart flew  
And surprised the whale knew  
He should dive without further delay.

The sun glistened on his hump's black crest  
As he prepared to escape this new pest  
With a flick of his fluke  
He announced his rebuke  
And swam off to get some more rest.

**Biopsies (Juan Carlos Salinas)**

Species	Weekly	Cumulative
Humpback whale	70	73
Dall's porpoise	0	1
Cuvier's beaked whale*	1	1

\*dead when sampled

**Oceanographic Operations**

Date	Number CTDs
7/1	1
7/2	0
7/3	1
7/4	1
7/5	1
7/6	1
7/7	1